

U.S. Serial No. 12/594,777
Preliminary Amendment dated March 9, 2011

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all previous versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for laying elongate articles from a vessel at sea, the apparatus comprising a tensioner for controlling paying out of said articles along an axis of said tensioner, a structure tiltable between upright and horizontal states, wherein the apparatus is operable in a first mode wherein the tensioner is carried by said structure with its axis at an elevated angle, aligned with a departure angle of the article being laid, and in a second mode wherein the tensioner is arranged with its axis substantially horizontal, the apparatus in the second mode receiving flexible elongate product from the tensioner along said axis and diverting it via a support structure to a more vertical angle for departure from the vessel.
2. (Previously Presented) Apparatus claimed in claim 1 wherein the tiltable structure in the first mode carries a radius controller and a straightener for conditioning rigid pipe at a position upstream of the tensioner.
3. (Original) Apparatus as claimed in claim 2 wherein the radius controller and/or the straightener are provided at least partially in the form of modules which can be removed when the apparatus is operated in the second mode.

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4. (Currently Amended) Apparatus as claimed in claim 3 wherein the ~~apparatus in the second mode~~ said support structure comprises an overboarding sheave to receive flexible elongate product from the tensioner along said axis and to divert it to a more vertical angle for departure from the vessel.
5. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 4 wherein the overboarding sheave is provided at least partially in the form of a module which can be removed when the apparatus is in the first mode.
6. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the tiltable structure is operable in the first mode to orient the tensioner vertically and at a range of angles below vertical.
7. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein in said second mode the tensioner is detached from and supported independently of the tiltable structure, the tiltable structure being returned to an upright orientation for supporting loads independently of the tensioner.
8. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 7 wherein the tiltable structure can be operated in the second mode at a range of angles either

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side of vertical, to support in-line accessories as the product is diverted to a more vertical angle for departure from the vessel.

9. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the tensioner in the second mode is located at a position displaced horizontally from a location from which it will be elevated by said tiltable structure in the first mode.

10. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the tiltable structure comprises a pair of legs pivoted to the deck of the vessel at their lower ends and joined by a crossbeam at their upper ends, the tensioner in the first mode being carried between the legs below the crossbeam, with a straightener and radius controller mounted above the crossbeam and being detachable when adapting the apparatus into the second mode.

11. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 9 wherein the tiltable structure is movable to provide said horizontal displacement of the tensioner.

12. (Original) Apparatus as claimed in claim 11 wherein the tiltable structure is connected to the vessel by one or more arms pivotally connected at one end to the tiltable structure and at another end to the vessel.

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13. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein a hydraulic control system of the tensioner is a dual hydraulic system.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Previously Presented) A method of configuring apparatus for laying elongate articles from a vessel at sea, the apparatus comprising a tensioner for controlling paying out of said articles along an axis of said tensioner, a structure tiltable between upright and horizontal states, wherein the apparatus is configurable in a first mode wherein the tensioner is carried by said structure with its axis at an elevated angle aligned with a departure angle of the article being laid, and in a second mode wherein the tensioner is arranged with its axis substantially horizontal, the apparatus in the second mode receiving flexible elongate product from the tensioner along said axis and diverting it to a more vertical angle for departure from the vessel, the method including detaching certain operating equipment from the structure, moving the structure between the upright position and the horizontal position and locating certain operating equipment for operation with the structure in the particular mode of operation.

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16. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein the operating equipment is provided as modules which can be removed and relocated with respect to the structure.

17. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 15 wherein the first mode a radius controller and/or straightener are provided at least partially in the form of modules which can be removed when the structure is in the horizontal state.

18. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 17 wherein the tensioner in the second mode is located at a position displaced horizontally from a location from which it will be elevated by said tiltable structure in the first mode.

19. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 18 wherein said operating equipment includes the includes an overboarding sheave to receive flexible elongate product from the tensioner along said axis and to divert it to a more vertical angle for departure from the vessel, wherein the overboarding sheave is detached from said tiltable structure in said first mode.

20. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in claim 19 wherein said operating equipment includes the tensioner itself, which is detached from and supported independently of said tiltable structure in said second mode.

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21. (Previously Presented) A method of laying rigid pipeline from a vessel, the method comprising paying out the pipeline using an apparatus as claimed in claim 1, operated in its first mode, the tensioner gripping and paying out the rigid pipeline while supported on said tiltable structure at an angle aligned with the angle of departure of the pipeline from the vessel.

22. (Previously Presented) A method of laying flexible pipeline from a vessel, the method comprising paying out the pipeline using an apparatus as claimed in claim 1, operated in its second mode, the tensioner gripping and paying out the flexible pipeline along said substantially horizontal axis, the pipeline being diverted by said apparatus from said horizontal axis to the angle of departure of the pipeline from the vessel.